

COMM. (202)

Recommendations of the PCGN-BGN conferees, July 15, 1960

The representatives of the PCGN and the BGN, at the conclusion of consultations during the period July 11-15, 1960, agreed as follows:

1. The draft report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names prepared at United Nations Headquarters, July 1, 1960, provides a sound basis for wider discussion. An advisory group of suitably qualified people should be established to provide continuity and to help coordinate national comments received on the draft report and to assist in the planning of future activities. The problems associated with geographic names embrace the cartographic field and extend beyond it. While every effort should be made to make the best use of cartographic programs for the collection of geographic names, the broader aspects of international coordination of effort in the collection of names require specialized linguistic, geographic and ethnographic knowledge. It was recommended that PCGN and BGN indicate to their respective Governments at the appropriate time their support of the recommendations in the draft report of the Group of Experts, so far as it concerns their foreign names work, and advocate the setting up of an advisory group.
2. It was agreed that much greater attention should be given by the world's toponymists to problems in the field collection of names and to the linguistic and geographical significance of names.
3. Adoption of a joint BGN-PCGN system for transliteration of Amharic should be held in abeyance, pending further developments in Ethiopia.
4. The complicity of the Thai language is a barrier to the accomplishment of complete uniformity in the application of the BGN-PCGN system, but a closer proximity may be obtained by procedures to be developed by the two bodies as a result of these discussions.
5. Exchange of views should be initiated looking toward formal BGN-PCGN codification of the modified Wade-Giles system for romanizing Chinese, the Modified Hepburn system for romanizing Japanese, and the McCune-Reischauer system for romanizing Korean.
6. Having compared at some length the means employed in the United Kingdom and the United States to deal with problems associated with the treatment of Arabic names, the meeting agreed that there

was hope of uniformity in the treatment of the names only as long as a single set of procedures was applied. The BGN had, after many years study of the linguistic, geographic and topographic problems involved, developed such procedures for arriving at standard forms of Arabic names expressed in terms of the BGN-PCGN system. In the PCGN various consultants had been used and the same uniform result had not been possible.

In order to remedy this situation it was clear that there was no alternative to PCGN providing itself with a competent Arabist who would by visit and correspondence confer and keep in close touch with the BGN in order to arrive at a standard joint procedure for the handling of the complex problem on both sides of the Atlantic.

Before any name could be adequately processed, sources in Arabic script fully written and as unambiguous as possible were necessary. The most effective way of achieving this was by way of tape recordings taken directly from informants in the field, and a battery operated tape recorder was probably the only satisfactory instrument. It was recommended that both BGN and PCGN promote this practice in the field collection of names to the maximum extent possible. It was agreed that the two bodies would consult together to draw up rules for the collection of names by this method and for their subsequent processing.

7. The BGN-PCGN acceptance in 1957 of the Hebrew Academy system was predicated upon the official Israeli adoption of the system, and in particular the Survey of Israel's stated intention to introduce it on their romanized maps. However, since the system itself has not been applied consistently in Israel and since the Survey of Israel has further decided to modify it for its own future use the conferees saw no alternative but to recommend the suspension of the BGN-PCGN (Hebrew Academy) system, pending clarification of the situation in Israel.

It was recommended that in the interim the current Survey of Israel system still in use on their romanized maps should be accepted. The required interim transliteration table will be drafted by PCGN.

The recommendations above relate to Hebrew names only and do not affect BGN-PCGN-Stanag procedures now in effect for the treatment of Arabic names in Israel.

8. The PCGN and BGN will proceed toward adoption of a joint system for the romanization of Burmese to be applied at an agreed time in the future.
9. Representations will be made to Cambodian authorities, utilizing the good offices of the U. S. Far East Command, advising them of the present discussions and the conclusions reached - that the 1960 system of romanization of Cambodian has serious defects in comparison with the 1959 system, and that improvement of the 1959 system might be possible.
10. It was agreed to recommend to Laos that existing roman alphabet names be retained and that new names be rendered in a form consonant with those; and that PCGN will seek further information about the system that was used in producing the existing roman alphabet forms.
11. BGN will consider accepting the Kurdish names in Iraq processed by the PCGN. PCGN will furnish the rules and subrules used in their processing of these names, and will also supply BGN with a review of the names affected in the BGN gazetteer.
12. The PCGN will consider accepting the names in the BGN Gazetteer of Mongolia until such time as adequate sources in Mongolian Cyrillic are available. PCGN and BGN will further confer on a possible joint system for transliteration of Mongolian Cyrillic.
13. The PCGN and BGN will give consideration to the use of Chinese Communist sources for primary transliterated names in Sinkiang and Tibet. PCGN and BGN will likewise use Chinese Communist names in Sinkiang for administrative divisions and their seats, and for newly named places.
14. BGN will make further studies of the new geographical dictionary of Afghanistan published by the Aryana Society, and will communicate the results of the study to PCGN, in order that it may then be decided whether reconsideration of present policies would be appropriate.
15. PCGN and BGN will, of necessity, continue to take names in the Somali Republic from British and Italian maps. Since the new state has as yet no official written language, it was felt that the recommendations in the report of the Group of Experts to ECOSOC might be particularly useful to the Somali Republic, especially

if consideration is given to the advantages of standardization of names in the roman alphabet.

16. PCGN and BGN will continue to accept Survey of India spellings in India as found on latest Survey of India maps or in any lists of changed spellings approved by the Survey of India and will exchange promptly any new information with reference to names in India.
17. PCGN and BGN will accept the definitive province lists of names in Turkey issued by the General Office of Vilâyet Administration, Turkish Ministry of the Interior, and printed by the General Map Office (1959) as soon as these have been completed for the whole country and officially adopted by Turkey.
18. For those areas under the administrative control of the USSR since 1945, BGN and PCGN agree in principle that when more names are needed than are available from postwar Soviet sources the names should not be taken from wartime or pre-war Soviet sources (since those produce transliterated names of doubtful value) but rather from sources published by the pre-war administering authority. In the case of German names in East Prussia, the changes introduced by the Hitler regime after 1937 will be disregarded. Account was taken of the possibility of obtaining current Soviet names for these places.
19. After discussion of the problems of names in various African countries, it was recommended that consideration be given to the possibility of aiding the identification of features in the field collection of names by the use of air photographs where no suitable mapping exists.
20. Important problems were raised with reference to names of small geographic features where it is often difficult to determine whether what one encounters is a geographic name or a mere description. It was agreed that these problems merit careful and continuing study by both PCGN and BGN.
21. With regard to the possibility (which the group was invited to consider) of a single standard system of transliterating Russian for English speaking use, the group noted that the BGN-PCGN system had gained universal acceptance by the armed forces of the NATO countries and felt that it could, with some additional marks, be made fully reversible for bibliographic purposes. The BSI system seems to offer less possibility of wide acceptance as an all-purpose system.

22. The present conference showed that the lapse of time since the last conference had led to an agenda too big to be dealt with adequately in a meeting of one week's duration. In view of the fluidity of the geographic name situation in many parts of the world and the significance of avenues opened up but not fully explored in the present discussions, the conferees recommend that PCGN and BGN consider meeting again sooner than two years from this date.